ON TRANSFORMING the COLONIAL and "CRIMINAL" MENTALITY

"...Don't be shocked when i say

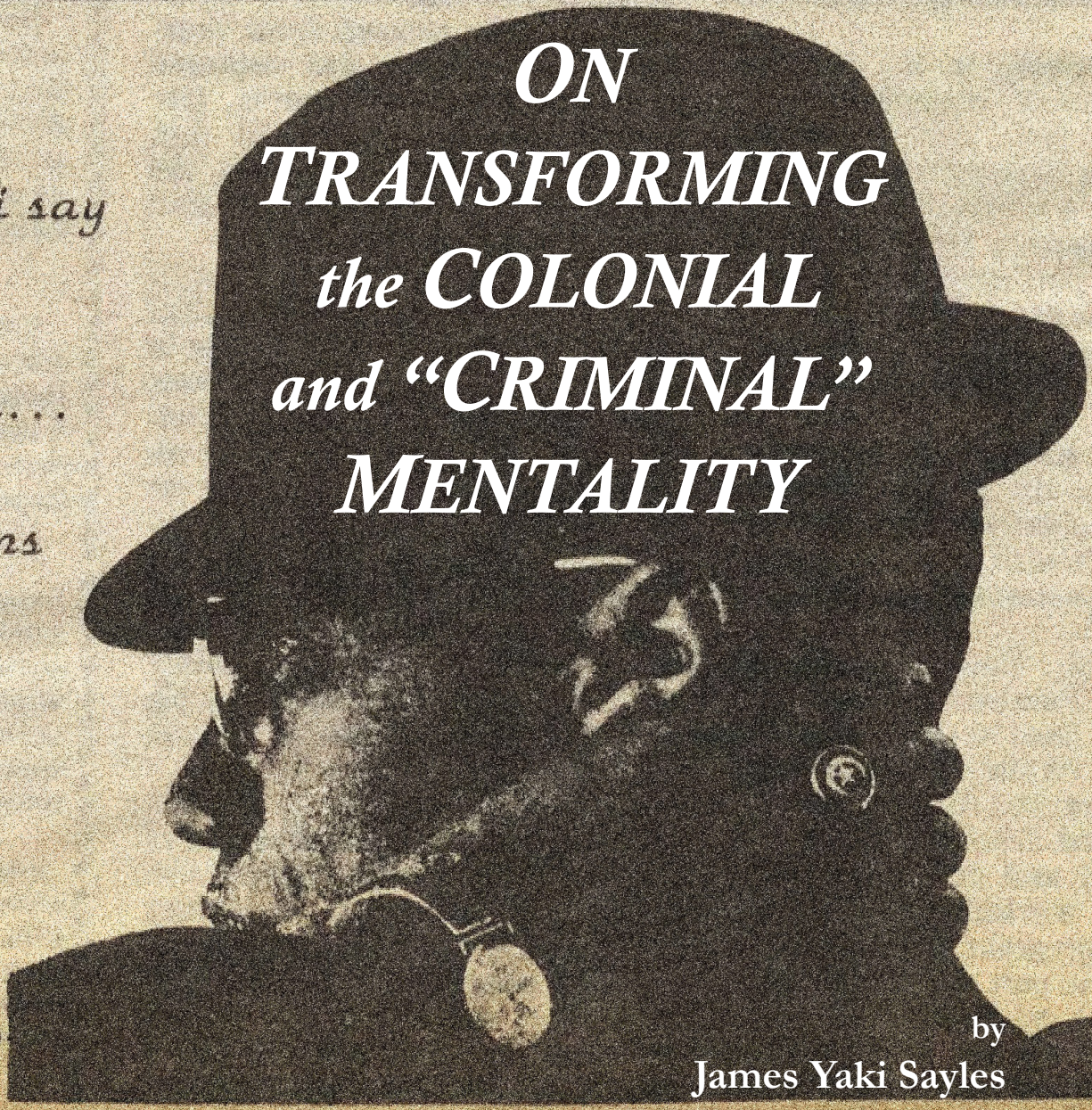
i was in prison,

You're STILL in prison...

That's what Amerika means

-- Prison!"

Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X)



by
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Terre Haute, Dwight, Atlanta and Alderson and all other prisons and jails in amerikkka.

As Comrade-Brother Sundiata Acoli has reminded us: "The jails (and prisons) are the Universities of the Revolutionaries and the finishing schools of the Black Liberation Army. Come, Brothers and Sisters, and meet Assata Shakur. She is holding seminars in 'Getting Down,' 'Taming the Paper Tiger,' and 'The Selected Works of Zayd Malik Shakur.' So Brothers and Sisters, do not fear jail (and prison). Many of you will go anyway—ignorance will be your crime. Others will come—awareness their only crime." (Sundiata Acoli, "From the Bowels of the Beast: A Message," from *Break de Chains*)

The prisons and our communities must establish "cadre training centers." There must be planned, systematic programs to meet us when We arrive behind the walls. "Seminars" are part of a well-thought-out, concretized curriculum. Organized.

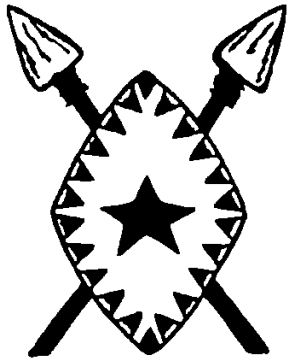
"The 'Prison Movement,' the August 7th Movement, and all similar efforts educate the people in the *illegitimacy* of the establishment power and *hint* at the ultimate goal of revolutionary consciousness at every level of struggle. The goal is always the same: the creation of an infrastructure capable of fielding a people's army."

From one generation to the next,

Build To Win The War!

For Independence and Socialism!

All Power To The People!



ON TRANSFORMING the COLONIAL and "CRIMINAL" MENTALITY

Revolutions are fought to get control of land, to remove the absentee landlord and gain control of the land and the institutions that flow from that land. The black man has been in a very low condition because he has had no control whatsoever over any land. He has been a beggar economically, a beggar politically, a beggar socially, a beggar even when it comes to trying to get some education. The past type of mentality that was developed in this colonial system among our people, today is being overcome. And as the young ones come up, they know what they want (land!). And as they listen to your beautiful preaching about democracy and all those other flowery words, they know what they're supposed to have (land!).

So you have a people today who not only know what they want, but also know what they are supposed to have. **And they themselves are creating another generation** *that is coming up that not only will know what it wants and know what it should have but also will be ready and willing to do whatever is necessary to see that what they should have materializes immediately.*

—El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X),
"The Black Revolution," from *Malcolm X Speaks*

During a conversation with a Comrade, the movie *Battle of Algiers* was mentioned, within the context of using that film as a way of making a comment on the present and probable direction that many prisoners are taking and that many more will take, in the escalating class and national liberation struggles inside u.s. borders.

An apology is made in advance, should We make errors in our recollection of events taking place in the film, or the order of their appearance.

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In the opening scene, or, in one of the early scenes, the setting is a prison, and the principal character was, We believe, portrayed as Ali Aponte.

Ali Aponte was an Algerian who had entered the prison as a "common criminal," or a "bandit"—and was then in the process of being politicized, and of politically educating himself. He was being approached by a revolutionary—a Prisoner of War—who had noticed Ali's strong sense of nationalism and his revolutionary *potential*; thus, his *potential* of becoming a Revolutionary Nationalist, rather than his remaining a bandit, a criminal, or a "lumpen" with nationalist *sentiments*, an *emotional commitment to nationalism*.

We know this already sounds familiar to many: "I've been in rebellion all my life. Just didn't know it." (Comrade-Brother George Jackson.) And, "For a young New Afrikan ('black') growing up in the ghetto, the first rebellion is always crime."

A clear distinction must be drawn between "rebellion" and "revolution," because unless this is done, We become confused in our thought and our actions. Arriving at clarity on this and other issues is a necessary aspect of transforming the criminal, and the colonial, mentality.

Of course, in a general sense, any failure to follow instructions demonstrates a lack of one or a combination of several things. In this case, We think Ali demonstrated that his commitment to himself, the people, and the organization was, at that point in time, still primarily emotional. When he jumped in front of the dog, he did so because he wanted to be seen. For him, at that point, his commitments were based heavily on the fact that the colonialists wouldn't "see him as a man, as a human being," and he wanted to be heard, to be recognized—*by the oppressor!* As slaves, colonial subjects, We tend not to feel worthy unless the oppressor in some way acknowledges our existence. When Ali jumped in front of the dog, he demonstrated that emotionalism in commitments is one of the major hindrances in the development of the degree of sophistication We need for success. He demonstrated that, at that point, the struggle for him was not yet a struggle for power, a struggle for self-government, and for seizure of property.

Tests of the kind mentioned here, as well as other kinds, will continue to be necessary. An understanding of, and a practice of discipline and adequate security are things that more attention should have been devoted to before Ali was released from prison. More attention should have been devoted to ridding Ali of his emotional commitments and related lingerings of a colonial mentality.

We see this in Algeria, but most of us see it better in places like Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Zimbabwe: Cadre are sent to training schools. PAIGC cadre spent years in their school in Conakry before they returned and began their work with the people. In other countries where national liberation struggles were and are taking place, the leading bodies in these struggles had schools established inside and outside the country where ideological and military training took place. ZANU cadre were so trained in Tanzania; our cadres are being and will be trained in places like Stateville, Trenton, San Quentin, Attica and Angola, La.; our cadres are in what We must consciously recognize as training schools in Bedford Hills, Jackson,

Ali Aponte, ex-bandit, aspiring revolutionary, was formally politicized in prison, made a general commitment to the people, a particular commitment to the F.L.N.—both of which had to first base themselves on a commitment to himself.

We come to a scene in the film where We see Ali after his release from prison, about to carry out an order, using his "skills" for the first time in the conscious commission of a revolutionary, rather than a "criminal"/personal, act.

In brief, Ali has been told to walk in a certain place, at a certain time, where he'll be met by a Sister carrying a piece inside a basket. He's to approach the Sister, take the piece, and approach a dog from behind and render a bit of criticism. Then he's to return the piece to the Sister's basket, and then space.

But, rather than follow these instructions, Ali takes the piece and jumps in front of the dog, waving the piece and running off at the mouth. When Ali's lungs are tired and his ego satisfied, he pulls the trigger only to learn that the piece is empty.

Ali had been tested—a test which revealed more than it was designed to.

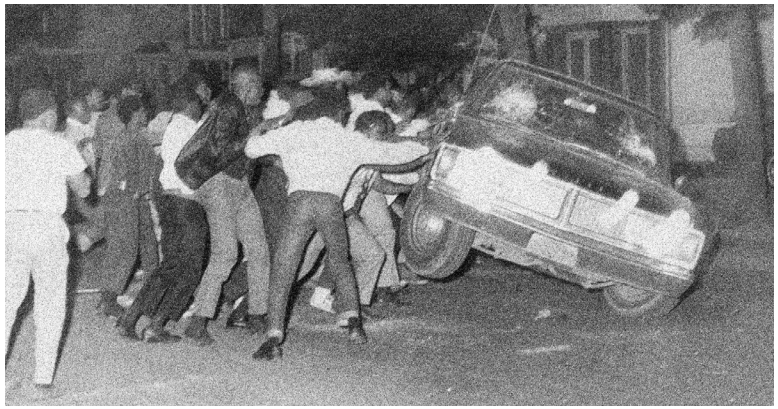
There are many factors involved in the process of successful revolutionary struggle, a successful party or organization. Only two of these factors are discipline and security. Discipline and security are concerns of parties and organizations, but parties and organizations are composed of individuals. What happens to each individual in the party or organization happens to the entire body, and vice versa. When Ali went back and screamed on comrades for giving him an empty piece, it was pointed out to him that the issue was not the empty piece, but Ali's failure to follow orders. This failure to follow orders endangered Ali, the Sister, and in effect, endangered the entire organization.

We can rebel against something, without necessarily "rebelling" or *making revolution* for something. A rebellion is generally an "attack" upon those who rule—but it is an "attack" which is spontaneous, short-lived, and without the purpose of replacing those who rule.

Rebellions bring into question the *methods* of those who rule, but stop short of actually calling into question their very right to rule, without calling into question the entire authority and the foundation upon which that authority or "legitimacy" rests.

We rebel as a means of exposing intolerable conditions and treatment, but We seek to have someone other than ourselves change these conditions, and to change the *treatment*, rather than to assume responsibility ourselves for our whole lives. A rebellion essentially wants to "end bad housing," have "full employment" and "end police brutality and change prison conditions," etc.—to *reform* the system, and leave the power to make these reforms in the hands of the massa.

A revolution, on the other hand, seeks not merely to reform the system, but to completely overthrow it, and to place the power for overthrowing it, and the power for running the new system that is established, in the hands of the revolutionary masses. Thus the slogan, "All Power To The People!"



It is hard to go beyond rebellion to revolution in this kountry because of the widespread belief that revolutions can be made as simply and instantly as one makes coffee. Therefore the tendency is to engage in acts of adventurism or confrontation which the rebels believe will bring down the system quickly. It is always much easier for the oppressed to undertake an adventuristic act on impulse than to undertake a protracted revolutionary struggle. A protracted revolutionary struggle requires that the oppressed masses acquire what they never start out with—confidence in their ability to win a revolution. Without that confidence, the tendency of many militants is toward martyrdom, in the hope that their death may at least become an inspiration to others...

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Revolutionary thinking begins with a series of illuminations. It is not just plodding along according to a list of axioms. Nor is it leaping from peak to peak...

★ ★ ★

...A revolution...initiates a new plateau, a new threshold...but it is still situated on the continuous line between past and future. It is the result of both long preparation and a profoundly new, a profoundly original beginning. Without a long period of maturing, no profound change can take place. But every profound change is at the same time a sharp break with the past...

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What is the relation between wants and thoughts? Between wants and needs? Between masses and revolutionists? Masses have wants which are not necessarily related to human needs. Revolutionists must have thoughts about human needs. They cannot just rely on the spontaneous outbursts of the masses over their wants. A revolutionist must absorb and internalize the lives, the passions, and the aspirations of great revolutionary leaders

defense units of the "mass front."

* * * * * * * * *

"Prestige bars any serious attack on power. Do people attack a thing they consider with awe, with a sense of its legitimacy?"

While destroying the legitimacy of the enemy, We must establish our own! The allegiance of the people must pass from the enemy state to the New Afrikan.

Ali Aponte's "military" activity was political activity—was inspired by, complemented, and was guided by the politics of the F.L.N., was guided by the new revolutionary nationalist theory and practice of the emerging Algerian People's State.

Ali could make no *serious* attack on the power of the colonialist state until its prestige had been destroyed. And this destruction of the colonialist state's prestige and its substitution by the prestige, the legitimacy, of the people's state—this does not take place all at once, but is a process; it builds in stages. Decreeing that dope pushers must find other means of survival is a part of the process. Enforcing the decree is part of the process. Satisfying the needs of the people, involving the people in the actual control of their own lives, moving with the people in seizing and using and further developing control of the productive forces and means of production is the process in its essence.

Ali Aponte's elimination of pimps and dope pushers was the fulfillment of a "state function." When Ali abandoned his "criminal mentality" and became a conscious revolutionary cadre, he became one of the most responsible members of the revolutionary people's state.

* * * * * * * * *

For us, the Political Prisoner is one who has made and who acts on a conscious political decision to change the present state of property relations. Altho the Political Prisoner and the Prisoner of War levels of thought and practice sometimes overlap, We use the element of organized revolutionary violence to distinguish between them—organized revolutionary violence of a distinct military type.

Political Prisoners are those arrested, framed, and otherwise imprisoned because of relatively peaceful political activity against the oppressive conditions of the people. Political Prisoners are also those Captured Colonials inside the walls who have adopted a "revolutionary mentality" and become politically active. Activity on the part of PPs behind the walls results in denial of release, punitive transfers, harassment and brutality, long periods of isolation, close censorship of mail and visits, behavior modification attempts, and even assassination at the hands of prison administrators, who sometimes employ reactionary prisoners to do their jobs for them.

We regard as Prisoners of War those Afrikans who have been imprisoned as a result of their having taken up arms or otherwise engaged in acts of organized revolutionary violence in its military form, against the u.s. imperialist state. The act of expropriation, acts of sabotage, intelligence and counter-intelligence activities, and support activities when directly linked to acts of military organized violence and/or organized groups which are part of the "armed front." Also, those activities of an overt or covert nature which are linked to the actions of armed people's defense units—those New Afrikans involved in such activities and imprisoned because of them, are considered as Prisoners of War.

We also regard as Prisoners of War those Captured Colonials and Political Prisoners who consciously commit acts of military organized revolutionary violence while behind the walls, as well as those who join or form organizations which are or will become part of the organized "armed front" and/or part of the armed people's

and not just those of the masses. It is true that revolutionary leadership can only come from persons in close contact with the masses in movement and with a profound conviction of the impossibility of profound change in (a new) society without the accelerated struggle of the masses. But leaders cannot get their thoughts only from the movement of the masses.

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A revolution begins with those who are revolutionary, exploring and enriching their notion of a "new man/woman" and projecting the notion of this "new man/woman" into which each of us can transform ourselves.

★ ★ ★

The first transformation begins with those who recognize and are ready to assume the responsibility for reflecting on our experiences and the experiences of other revolutionary men and women. Thus the first transformation can begin with our own re-thinking. That is why We believe it is so crucial that before We undertake to project the perspectives for (New Afrikan) revolution, We review what previous revolutions of our epoch have meant in the evolution of man/womankind. As We study these revolutions, the first thing We shall learn is that all the great revolutionists have projected a concept of revolution to the masses. They did not just depend on the masses or the movement of their day for their idea of what should be done. They evaluated the state of the world and their own society. They internalized the most advanced ideas about human development which had been arrived at on a world scale. They projected a vision of what a revolution would mean in their own society. They analyzed the different social forces within their country carefully to ascertain which forces could be mobilized to realize this vision. They carried on ideological struggle against those who were not ready to give leadership to the masses or who were trying to lead them in the wrong direction. Only then did they try to lead their own masses...

The failure to make a similar distinction between a *rebellion* and *revolution* is what prevents many bloods from recognizing, and then making, the transformation from Captive Colonials to Political Prisoners, and prevents those outside the walls from making the transformation from colonial subjects to conscious citizens and active cadres.

It prevents us from consciously and systematically "bringing up a new generation" who know the difference between New Afrikan reform and rebellion, and New Afrikan revolution. It prevents us from consciously and systematically creating New Afrikan *revolutionary* leadership, to lead a *revolutionary* movement, as opposed to new forms of "civil rights" struggles under bourgeois leadership, for bourgeois ends.

It prevents us from making a class analysis of the forces inside our own neo-colonized nation, so that We can carefully ascertain exactly which forces can be mobilized to realize the vision of a New Afrikan revolution.

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More of Comrade-Brother George Jackson's words are familiar to us: "Prisons are not institutionalized on such a massive scale by the people. Most people realize that crime is simply the result of a grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege, a reflection of the present state of property relations..." And, "We must educate the people in the real causes of economic crimes. They must be made to realize that even crimes of passion are the psychosocial effects of an economic order that was decadent a hundred years ago. All crime can be traced to objective socio-economic conditions—socially productive or counter-productive activity. In all cases, it is determined by the economic system, the method of economic organization..."

of the suffering We all experienced as a dominated *New*...Afrikan nation.

> *...But so far as the struggle is concerned, it must be realized that it is not the degree of suffering and hardship involved as such that matters: even extreme suffering in itself does not necessarily produce the* prise de conscience *required for the national liberation struggle.*
>
> —Amilcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea*

While the "criminal" acts of all Afrikans are the results of our general economic, political and social relationships to the oppressive, imperialist state, there is no automatic, unquestionable revolutionary nationalist capacity and consciousness.

If We say that "crime" is a "reflection of the present state of property relations," then We must also say that for us, these relations are those between a dominated nation and its oppressor and exploiter. The method of economic organization which governs our lives is an *imperialist, a neo-colonialist* method. Altho this colonial system is structured so as to force many of us to take what We need in order to survive, and altho there are conscious political decisions made by the oppressor, once We find ourselves in the grips of his "criminal justice system," it must also be seen that a *conscious political decision* must also be made on the part of the colonial subject before his acts can have a *subjective, functional political meaning within the context of the national liberation struggle.*

Put another way: if the "criminal" acts of Afrikans are the results of a "grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege," which stems from our status as a dominated, neo-colonized nation, then the only way to prevent crime among us is to make a conscious decision to liberate the nation and establish among ourselves a more equitable distribution of wealth and privilege.

Thus, We see Captured Colonials.

Prisoners and even of POWs, simply by pointing out that they are in amerikkka against their will, had their culture destroyed, etc. Such a position actually liquidates the politics behind the status of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, thus, in the same process, liquidating the politics behind the struggle for national liberation.

All New Afrikans in amerikkka are members of an oppressed nation, which in itself is "political," and lends automatic political meaning to the conditions suffered by us all, whether in prison or out. But the recognition of the political significance that our colonial status has, does not define revolutionary nationalist consciousness or practice.

Recognizing objective colonial status is the point of departure, but We won't begin the journey of nation building without an analysis of our own internal, neo-colonial, social structure. Just as We see the need for class analysis to take place outside the walls, the same analysis must take place for those inside the kamps.

Thus We say that in making our analysis of the nation, and in focusing particularly on those of us inside the kamps, We see three sectors: the Captured Colonials, the Political Prisoner, and the Prisoner of War.

The Captured Colonials are the mass, general prison populations which Afrikans comprise. The simple status of a 20th-century slave gives political character and significance to us all. But it doesn't determine whether that political character and significance will be good or bad—for the nation and the struggle.

The New Afrikan nation in amerikkka was formed because of and during the battles with europeans in which We lost our independence.

During our enslavement the many nations and tribes from the Continent shared one history, developed essentially one consciousness, acquired objectively one destiny—all as a result

Many prisoners, and many people outside the walls—many Political Prisoners and even some POWs—have, We believe, not taken the interpretation of the above words far enough. We feel this way because many Comrades have based many of their beliefs and positions on the "inherent" revolutionary capacity of "lumpen" on their understanding of the above-quoted statements. We tend to overlook the fact that Comrade George was making a broad analysis, describing objective factors and presenting a general ideological perspective. The grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege, and the "crime" that results from it, does not automatically make us revolutionaries.

The real causes of crime are not necessarily—not of themselves—the causes of commitments to revolutionary struggle. Objective economic conditions, the method of economic organization, are not of themselves factors which inspire and/or cement conscious activity in revolutionary nationalist People's War.

Comrade George described the *objective* set of conditions—the economic *basis* of "crime"—and he recognized that he had been *objectively* in "rebellion" all his life. But he also said "Just didn't know it." He wasn't aware of his acts as being forms of rebellion. He wasn't *conscious* of himself as a "victim of social injustice." And, he wasn't *consciously* directing his actions toward the destruction of the enemy.

> *I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao...***and they redeemed me.** *For the first four years, I studied nothing but economics and military ideas. I met the black guerrillas, George "Big Jake" Lewis, and James Carr, W. C. Nolen, Bill Christmas, Tony Gibson and many others.* **We attempted to transform the black criminal mentality into a black revolutionary mentality.**

And Comrades asked, in the past, "What is the difference between these mentalities?" primarily because it was hard to see the difference,

and it had been assumed that there was no difference between the "lumpen" and the "outlaw" or the revolutionary. Some bloods simply want the "lumpen" to be the outlaw, the revolutionary, and some say that this is what "George said." George said that the revolutionary was a lawless man, because revolution is illegal in amerikkka. Thus, the revolutionary, the "outlaw" and "the lumpen" would make the revolution...Some bloods read revolutionary actuality into the potentiality alluded to by George in his analysis of the economic basis of crime. This is also related to the "learning by rote" of Marxism-Leninism, and to the overemphasis of the "economics of Marxism" and failure to grasp the significance of the "conscious element."

> *The materialist doctrine that men are the products of circumstances and education, that changed men are therefore the products of other circumstances and of a different education, forgets that circumstances are in fact changed by men and that the educator himself must be educated. (Marx)*
>
> *Marxist philosophy holds that the most important problem does not lie in understanding laws of the objective world and thus being able to explain it, but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world...Only social practice can be the criterion of truth. (Mao)*

In order for us to know Ali Aponte today as an Algerian *revolutionary*, he had to become politicized, consciously joining with the Algerian F.L.N., and point his guns at the enemies of the Algerian people.

The employment of the skills he acquired and sharpened as a "bandit" continued to "violate the law" of the colonial state—but the difference was fundamental.

Aponte's previous violations of the colonialist state's law were violations of an individual, for personal gain. But more important, they were seen even by him at that stage as true "violations of law"

> *oppressor nation nationals differently from those of the oppressed nation, don't alone make for the independence and socialist development of New Afrika.*
>
> *What We got to see more clearly is that, while all colonial subjects are "the same," vis-a-vis the oppressor, one of the requirements for genuine and successful national liberation revolution is the making of an analysis of the oppressed nation's social structure. The conditions that* **all** *Afrikans in amerikkka experience are essentially and objectively colonial. But this doesn't mean that all Afrikan people have the same revolutionary capacity or inclination.*
>
> *When We define* **all** *Afrikan prisoners as Political Prisoners and/or POWs, We* **aren't** *really defining 'Political Prisoners'—We're simply defining Afrikan prisoners* **as colonial subjects—captured** *colonial subjects.*
>
> *Plain and simply: our objective status as colonial subjects gives the political content to our entire lives, our overall condition and experiences. Yeah, all Afrikans are POWs and PPs, whether inside or outside of prison—***if** *We simply deal from our status as a neo-colonized nation. But in dealing in this way, We* **only** *see ourselves as opposed to the oppressor, and the implications of this view are that We only perceive a re-form of the oppressor's system, so that We'll be treated "the same" and with "equality" with the oppressor and the masses in the oppressor nation. Such a view is not revolutionary, and runs counter to other ideo-theoretical and political lines rooted in a colonial perspective, and aim toward independence and state power—the building of a nation, based on class analysis of the colonized people.*

If We continue to see nothing but "*all* Afrikans are POWs and PPs," We'll end up struggling *against* imperialism, but not necessarily *for* national liberation. Saying that *all* Afrikans are "political prisoners" is, if the truth be told, an essentially idealist and bourgeois nationalist position. It would allow stool-pigeons and all kinds of backward and reactionary elements to claim the status of Political

nation, with the aim of building consciousness and providing a guide in the successful execution of a struggle for national liberation. In developing and spreading such a theory, it becomes necessary to analyze "the different social forces within (the nation) carefully, to ascertain which forces can be mobilized to realize the vision of a New Society."

In *Book Two* of the *Journal*, the following position was put forth in regard to Captive Colonials, Political Prisoners, and Prisoners of War:

> *Moving to define Afrikan Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War must also be within the context of national liberation revolution. Remembering that We're in the process of freeing and* **Building** *a nation.*
>
> *The first and major problem We run into is the present tendency to view* **all** *Afrikan prisoners as Political Prisoners. There are reasons why many or most of us say that* **all** *Afrikans (in prison) are PPs or POWs. Some folks start from the fact of our kidnapping and enslavement more than three centuries ago, and the continuous struggle to break de chains. Some folks deal with the fact of "objective socio-economic conditions," and trace the "cause of all crime" to this source. By this means, to say that "political-economic" circumstances make all those who become a "victim" of them, automatic Political Prisoners and/or Prisoners of War. Still others point to the enemy "criminal justice system," which deals with Afrikans in ways different from whites.*
>
> *The point is that all these definitions simply point out the objective colonial relationship.*
>
> *The objective existence of Afrikan peoples' enslavement over three centuries ago don't alone make for* **national liberation.** *The objective conditions of the socio-economics of our neo-colonial status don't alone make for* **building** *a nation. The objective reality of a "criminal justice system" which operates throughout the empire, and touches neo-colonial subjects as well as the oppressed inside the mother kountry, but treats the*

because the "law" and *the state* that it upheld were still recognized by Aponte as being legitimate. He *was* a "criminal" because he still saw himself as a "criminal" within the definition and the practice of colonialist oppression. This is an aspect of the "criminal" and the colonial mentality: continued recognition and acceptance of the legitimacy of colonial rule; to continue to feel that the colonial state has a right to rule over the colonized.

> *For every system of state and law, and the capitalist system above all, exists in the last analysis because its survival, and the validity of its statutes, are simply accepted (by the colonized)...The* **isolated** *violation of those statutes does not represent any particular danger to the state* **as long as such infringements figure in the general consciousness merely as isolated cases.** *Dostoyevsky has noted in his Siberian reminiscences how every criminal feels himself to be guilty (without necessarily feeling any remorse). He understands with perfect clarity that he has broken laws that are no less valid for him than for everyone else. And these laws retain their validity even when personal motives or the force of circumstances induced him to violate them.*
>
> —George Lukacs, "Legality and Illegality,"
> *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*

When We break this down more, We see that key phrases are those pointing to the *isolated* violations of the oppressive state's law—isolated violations because they do not represent a danger to the oppressive state. And they do not represent a danger to the oppressive state because they continue to "figure in the general consciousness merely as isolated cases." Now, "general consciousness" represents both the general consciousness of individuals, who have not yet come to recognize the oppressive state as illegitimate, and it represents the general consciousness of the masses of the oppressed. Because We continue to regard the massas as a legitimate, rightful authority, We continue to feel that the laws it imposes upon us are laws "that are no less valid for us than for anyone else." This is why We can feel guilty, without feeling remorse—the lack of remorse stemming from the "bad conditions" We know to exist, which becomes the

reformist-oriented "rebellious tendency." As long as We continue to see the oppressive state as legitimate ruler, even the circumstances and personal motives which push us toward "crime" continue to be isolated cases, presenting no danger to the foundations of the oppressive state, and offering no benefits toward the struggle for independence and socialism.

This "criminal/colonial" mentality was similarly described by Comrade-Sister Assata Shakur: "I am sad when I see what happens to women who lose their strength. They see themselves as bad children who expect to be punished because they have not, in some way, conformed to the conduct required of 'good children' in the opinion of prison guards. Therefore, when they are 'punished' they feel absolution has been dealt and they are again in the 'good graces' of the guards. Approval has been given by the enemy, *but the enemy is no longer recognized as an enemy.* The enemy becomes the maternal figure patterning their lives. It's like a plantation in prison. You can see the need for a revolution. Clearly..."

Before Comrade George met Marx and the black guerrillas, *his* mentality was best characterized as "criminal." It was only after he was "redeemed" that he was able to see himself as a victim of social injustice; that he was able to know that his past "criminal" acts had been an embryonic form of rebellion, had constituted a *tendency* and *potential* for undermining the oppressive state's "authority," its prestige, the "legitimacy" of its law, and to overthrow it.

> *The prestige of power as the subjective effect of a past deed or reputation, real or fancied, then has a very definite life process. The prestige of the capitalist class inside the u.s. reached its maturity with the close of the 1860–1864 civil war. Since that time there have been no serious threats to their power; their excesses have taken on a certain legitimacy through long usage.*
>
> *Prestige bars any serious attack on power. Do people attack a thing they*

What We've said about the need for conscious awareness and conscious activity, in order for there to be a transformation of the "criminal" and colonial mentalities, into revolutionary mentality, also applies to the definition of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War.

We think that Howard Moore's definition of Political Prisoners, as quoted by Comrade-Brother George Jackson in *Blood in My Eye*, is insufficient:

> *All black people, wherever they are, whatever their crimes, even crimes against other blacks, are political prisoners because the system has dealt with them differently than with whites. Whitey gets the benefit of every law, every loophole, and the benefit of being judged by his peers—other white people. Black people don't get the benefit of any such jury trial by peers. Such a trial is almost a cinch to result in the conviction of a black person, and it's a conscious political decision that blacks don't have those benefits...*

This definition is cool for helping to explain the colonial relationship that blacks have to amerikkka—as a people. But it fails to lay out the true, proper, and *necessary* criteria for Political Prisoners: *Practice* is that criteria. On the bottom line, Political Prisoners are revolutionaries; they are conscious and active servants of the people. Political Prisoners direct their energies toward the enemies of the people—they do not commit "crimes" against the people.

We say that Moore's definition—and any similar definition—is insufficient because it simply defines the situation of New Afrikan ("black") people vis-a-vis the oppressive state. The definition says that all New Afrikan people—the whole New Afrikan nation—have a particular political relationship to amerikkka which is clearly separate and distinct from the political relationship that white people share with their government and its institutions. But this definition is insufficient from the perspective of a theory put forth by the

played an important part in advancing the status of various groups. But Cleaver failed to note that organized crime has sought to advance itself **totally within the framework of the established society.** *It seeks more power for itself, and as a side effect it may bring more money into the hands of this or that ethnic group,* **but organized crime is far from being a revolutionary force.** *On the contrary,* **its social function is to provide an informally sanctioned outlet** *for impulses that officially are outlawed (like revolution). It thereby acts to* **uphold and preserve** *the present social order.*

Cleaver's analysis, to the extent that it reflected Panther thinking, revealed the organization's uncertainty about its objectives. This problem stemmed from an inadequate analysis of the manifold ways in which the amerikkkan social structure absorbs and neutralizes dissent...

—Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*

There is a scene/sequence in *Battle of Algiers* where Ali Aponte, the ex-criminal, the revolutionary nationalist and member of the F.L.N., confronts "lumpen"/criminal elements who are "surviving the best way they know how"—under the existing circumstances. Ali makes this confrontation in accordance with the F.L.N. view that a weak and disorganized, demoralized and diseased people cannot successfully attack and defeat the enemy.

The pimps, dope pushers and otherwise backward elements were asked, warned, encouraged to find other means of "survival"—means which would be more in tune with the needs and direction of the people, and the national liberation struggle. The backward elements refused, resisted the transformation of their mentalities, and thus placed themselves squarely in the path of the nation's progress. Ali Aponte responded to this refusal, to this blocking of progress and national salvation, with a short burst from his Thompson.

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consider with awe, with a sense of its legitimacy?

In the process of things, the prestige of power emerges roughly in that period when power does not have to exercise its underlying basis—violence. Having proved and established itself, it drifts, secure from any serious challenge. Its automatic defense-attack instincts remain alert; small threats are either ignored away, laughed away, or in the cases that may build into something dangerous, slapped away. To the masters of capital, the most dreadful omen of all is revolutionary scientific socialism. The gravedigger evokes fear response. Prestige wanes if the first attacks on its power base find it wanting. Prestige dies when it cannot prevent further attacks upon itself.

—Comrade-Brother George Jackson

To kill the prestige of the oppressive state, is, first of all, to kill the image of its legitimacy in the minds of the people. To transform the criminal mentality, and the colonial mentality, into a revolutionary mentality, is to destroy within the minds of the people the sense of awe in which they hold the oppressive state.

For Comrade George to become first the Political Prisoner, and then a Prisoner of War, he had to move beyond the mere understanding of the objective economic law and its relationship to "crime"; he had to begin *applying* his knowledge of revolutionary activity aimed toward changing the world, toward changing these objective economic laws and eradicating their effect upon the people. We know George today as a revolutionary because he educated himself and then went on to change existing circumstances.

If We were to leave the objective analysis/understanding of the economic basis of "crime" and proceed no further, We end up legitimizing the dope pushers in our communities, the pimps and other backward, reactionary elements who engage in such activity because of the circumstances caused by the present economic order. We can't continue to say "the devil made me do it." If We

don't move beyond an explanation of objective socio-economic conditions, and consequently don't move beyond the acceptance of "criminal" activity on the part of "lumpen" as somehow honorable and inherently revolutionary, simply because they reflect the present state of property relations, what We will end up doing is condoning those relations in practice if not in words. We will end up accepting the ideology behind those relations as well.

> *Revolution within a modern industrial capitalist society can only mean the overthrow of all existing property relations and the destruction of all institutions that* **directly** *or* **indirectly** *support the existing property relations. It must include the total suppression of all* **classes** *and* **individuals** *who endorse the present state of property relations or* **who stand to gain from it.** *Anything less than this is reform.*
>
> —Comrade George

And this applies not only to those who rule, to the monopoly capitalist, the world-runners. It applies to "lumpen" as well:

> *Actually, for those who are not incorporated into the system, for whatever reasons, (capitalist) society provides its own alternative—organized crime. In the ghetto this alternative is legitimized by the fact that so many people are forced to engage in at least petty illegal activity in order to secure a living income. The pervasiveness of the lucrative numbers racket and dope peddling rings further enhances organized criminality in the eyes of ghetto youth. Social scientists have observed that the role of criminal is one model to which such youth can reasonably aspire. It provides a realistic "career objective," certainly more realistic than hoping to become a diplomat or a corporation executive. Consequently, many ghetto youths turn to illegal activity—car thievery, pimping prostitution, housebreaking, gambling, dope pushing, etc.—as a way of earning an income. Those who don't turn to crime still come into contact with and are affected by the mystique of organized crime, a mystique which is widespread in the ghetto. This mystique asserts that it is possible to spit in the face of the major legal and moral imperatives of (amerikkkan capitalist) society and still be a financial success and achieve power and influence.*

> *To the extent that the Panthers were successful in penetrating the hard core of the ghetto and recruiting black youth, it would seem that they would be forced to confront the social implications of organized crime and its meaning for black liberation. They were well equipped to do this, since many of their own activists and leaders—such as Cleaver—were ex-criminals. Cleaver did attempt to present such an analysis shortly before he disappeared from public view...but he did not take his analysis far enough and consequently his conclusions only served to confuse the matter further.*
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> *Numerous sociological studies have shown that in many respects organized crime is only the reverse side of amerikkkan business. It provides desirable—though proscribed—goods and services, which are not available to the public through "normal" business channels.*
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> *And, although there is much public ranting against crime, organized crime—and it must be organized to succeed as a business—enjoys a certain degree of immunity from prosecution due to the collusion of police and public officials. Moreover, organized crime constantly seeks—as would any good corporation—to expand and even legitimize its own power,* **but it has no serious motive to revamp the present social structure because it is that structure, with all its inherent flaws and contradictions, which provides a climate in which organized crime can flourish.** *Hence, it comes as no surprise that in at least one major riot (in Baltimore) police recruited local criminals to help quell the rebellion. The criminals gladly collaborated with the cops because heavy looting during the riot had seriously depressed prices for stolen goods and otherwise disrupted the illegal business operations upon which the criminals depended for their livelihood.*
>
> *Cleaver in his analysis, however, misread the social function of organized crime. In speeches and articles, he voiced approval of such underworld notables as Al Capone and Machine Gun Kelly on the grounds that their criminal activities were instrumental in building the present power of ethnic groups such as the Italians and the Irish. He concluded that beneath the public facade there is a history of intense struggle for ethnic group power in the urban centers of amerikkka, and that organized criminal activity has*